

CHAPTER 63—FEDERAL CAVE RESOURCES PROTECTION

(Pub. L. 100-691, § 2, Nov. 18, 1988, 102 Stat. 4546.)

SHORT TITLE

Section 1 of Pub. L. 100-691 provided that: “This Act [enacting this chapter] may be referred to as the ‘Federal Cave Resources Protection Act of 1988’.”

LECHUGUILLA CAVE PROTECTION

Pub. L. 103-169, Dec. 2, 1993, 107 Stat. 1983, provided that:

“SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

“This Act may be cited as the ‘Lechuguilla Cave Protection Act of 1993’.

“SEC. 2. FINDING.

“Congress finds that Lechuguilla Cave and adjacent public lands have internationally significant scientific, environmental, and other values, and should be retained in public ownership and protected against adverse effects of mineral exploration and development and other activities presenting threats to the areas.

“SEC. 3. LAND WITHDRAWAL.

“(a) WITHDRAWAL.—Subject to valid existing rights, all Federal lands within the boundaries of the cave protection area described in subsection (b) are hereby withdrawn from all forms of entry, appropriation, or disposal under the public land laws; from location, entry, and patent under the United States mining laws; and from disposition under all laws pertaining to mineral and geothermal leasing, and all amendments thereto.

“(b) LAND DESCRIPTION.—The cave protection area referred to in subsection (a) shall consist of approximately 6,280 acres of lands in New Mexico as generally depicted on the map entitled ‘Lechuguilla Cave Protection Area’ numbered 130/80,055 and dated April 1993.

“(c) PUBLICATION, FILING, CORRECTION, AND INSPECTION.—(1) As soon as practicable after the date of enactment of this Act [Dec. 2, 1993], the Secretary of the Interior (hereinafter referred to as the ‘Secretary’) shall publish in the Federal Register the legal description of the lands withdrawn under subsection (a) and shall file such legal description and a detailed map with the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the United States Senate and the Committee on Natural Resources of the United States House of Representatives.

“(2) Such map and legal description shall have the same force and effect as if included in this Act except that the Secretary may correct clerical and typographical errors.

“(3) Copies of such map and legal description shall be available for inspection in the appropriate offices of the Bureau of Land Management.

“SEC. 4. MANAGEMENT OF EXISTING LEASES.

“(a) SUSPENSION.—The Secretary shall not permit any new drilling on or involving any Federal mineral or geothermal lease within the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a) until the effective date of the Record of Decision for the Dark Canyon Environmental Impact Statement, or for 12 months after the date of enactment of this Act [Dec. 2, 1993], whichever occurs first.

“(b) AUTHORITY TO CANCEL EXISTING MINERAL OR GEOTHERMAL LEASES.—Upon the effective date of the Record of Decision for the Dark Canyon Environmental Impact Statement and in order to protect Lechuguilla Cave or other cave resources, the Secretary is authorized to—

“(1) cancel any Federal mineral or geothermal lease in the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a); or

“(2) enter into negotiations with the holder of a Federal mineral or geothermal lease in the cave protection area referred to in section 3(a) to determine appropriate compensation, if any, for the complete or partial termination of such lease.

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CHAPTER REFERRED TO IN OTHER SECTIONS

This chapter is referred to in section 460000-5 of this title.

§ 4301. Findings, purposes, and policy

(a) Findings

The Congress finds and declares that—

(1) significant caves on Federal lands are an invaluable and irreplaceable part of the Nation's natural heritage; and

(2) in some instances, these significant caves are threatened due to improper use, increased recreational demand, urban spread, and a lack of specific statutory protection.

(b) Purposes

The purposes of this chapter are—

(1) to secure, protect, and preserve significant caves on Federal lands for the perpetual use, enjoyment, and benefit of all people; and

(2) to foster increased cooperation and exchange of information between governmental authorities and those who utilize caves located on Federal lands for scientific, education, or recreational purposes.

(c) Policy

It is the policy of the United States that Federal lands be managed in a manner which protects and maintains, to the extent practical, significant caves.